



These Are the Heroes!

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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I hate it when people are rude. I hate war and abuse and systems that don't work well. But today, most of all, I hate Multiple Sclerosis because it has attacked my sister.

Debbie was a very lively, risk-taking child who adopted a carefree "do it my way" lifestyle. She lived every day as though it was her last - having fun, taking chances and stretching the boundaries.

One day, as a young adult, Debbie went to the doctor because a bright spot was blocking her vision. She was told that her eye had been burned from the sun's reflection off the hood of her car. Other strange symptoms began to occur. She would drop things unexpectedly or bump into the door jamb because of coordination problems. She was worried about looking after her infant son because she couldn't trust her body.

For years, Debbie sought treatment, but, without accurate diagnosis, this was fruitless. Finally, when she had an MRI a couple of decades ago, she was told that she has Multiple Sclerosis. Since then she has done everything possible to prevent and treat her symptoms. She has raised funds, advocated for medication coverage and researched therapy options.

I have watched from the sidelines with great sadness, feelings of helplessness and, at the same time, amazement because of the tenacity and strength that Debbie, her husband and son have demonstrated.

Debbie is not alone. Every week I work with individuals who are suffering from physical health problems such as fibromyalgia, cancer, diabetes and heart disease. One client has just had his thirty-ninth surgery following an automobile accident! Others present with various physical ailments such as painful arthritis, impotence, various addictions or learning disabilities.

Being trapped in a body that doesn't work is horrible and can result in or be complicated by mental disorders such as depression and anxiety.

Over the years, I have had many clients who have inspired me by their attitudes and perspectives. They carry on despite pain and mobility restrictions. They test new drugs and listen to doctors who innocently state "I don't know". They give up activities and watch their worlds grow smaller and smaller. They depend on their immediate families more and more for everyday functioning. And, at the same time, they smile, enjoy a good joke, send Christmas cards, share their love and inspire others.

I'm so proud of my sister Deb and her family - Hugh and Kyle. In this world where many have it "easy" they face daily challenges with Deb's health.

These are the true heroes of life!